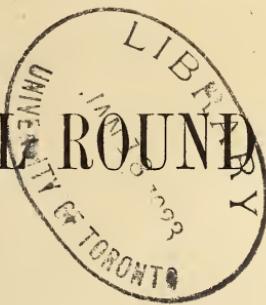


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HOME RULE ALL ROUND: OR FEDERAL UNION.



LETTER
TO
THE RIGHT HON. H. H. ASQUITH,
M.P. FOR THE EASTERN DIVISION OF FIFE.

BY
WILLIAM MITCHELL OF FERRYMYRE,
ONE OF HIS CONSTITUENTS,

DECEMBER, 1893.

(N.B.--After reading this Letter, you should pass it on for personal use to some Elector in another Scottish Constituency, and so oblige the writer.—W. M.)

CUPAR-FIFE:
PRINTED BY A. WESTWOOD & SON.

"Every man ought to have a local as well as a general and national patriotism. Every man ought to have a special feeling for the district in which he lives, and a special desire to bring it up to a true and high level of public principles."—*Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, 16th April, 1888.*

"Parliament is getting less able every year to overtake the mass of business which comes before it. . . . Plans of Devolution and Grand Committees will fail to cope with this evil. To overcome it, we need some organic change in our present Parliamentary system, some form of Decentralization, which shall leave the Imperial Parliament supreme over all subordinate bodies, yet relegate to the historic and geographical divisions of the United Kingdom the management severally of their own local affairs."—*Handbook of Home Rule, edited by the Rt. Hon. James Bryce, M.P.*

EDINBURGH, 19th December, 1893.
7 BLACKFORD ROAD.

The Rt. Hon. H. H. ASQUITH,
M.P. for East Fife.

SIR,

In common, I suppose, with all your constituents, I have received the authorized edition of the speeches delivered by you at Leven on the 20th, and at Ladybank on the 21st of October last.

Having given these speeches careful consideration with a sincere desire to support you, if possible, at the next General Election, I find myself unable to do so if the policy of the Government which you represent shall remain such as, from these speeches, I gather it to be at present.

It is no light thing for one, who, like his father before him, has been all his life a Liberal, to contemplate separation from his party. Although it is 44 years since I left my native town of Cupar, and 32 since my father died, there are still some people in the burgh who remember Provost Mitchell, and I feel it due to his memory and to them to endeavour in this way to account for the apparent change in my faith as a hereditary Liberal.

I may explain, in the first place, that my conversion to Home Rule as an essential principle of Liberal politics took place before I had heard of Mr Gladstone's. In proof of this, I can quote from a letter which I addressed to your predecessor, Mr Boyd Kinnear, prior to the General Election of 1886, which was published at the time:—

“Time was,” I wrote, “when Scottish lands were ‘thirled’ to mills, often at inconvenient distances, and our agricultural ancestors had to pay ‘multures and sequels’ to the Baron’s mill whether it ground their corn or not. England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales are each thirled to a great imperial legislative mill. By a scramble each country manages occasionally to get a little corn ill ground, for which it pays very dear, and, while the mill is grinding for others, our Parliamentary servants have to stand idly by. The days of thirlage are long gone by, and my hope and belief is that, inasmuch as the Imperial Parliament is now insufficient for its ever-increasing work, the present absurd system of local legislation may soon be as much a thing of the past.

“Let me say in conclusion, as I did in a letter to the

Scotsman last December—(four months before the introduction of Mr Gladstone's first Irish Home Rule Bill)—‘If the pacification of Ireland, the due administration of local government, the efficiency and dignity of the Imperial Parliament, the cohesion of the colonies and the mother country, and the reform of the House of Lords, are all, as I think, to be best promoted by devolving on a National Parliament for each of the three kingdoms the regulation of its own internal affairs, leaving to the Imperial Parliament matters of Imperial concern, may we not hope that the new Parliament may rise as one man to an occasion for patriotic statesmanship and careful, yet thorough, constitutional reform, such as has never before presented itself in the history of this great Empire?’”

Eight years have passed away since these words were written, and what do we find? What is the result of the constitutional legislation undertaken by Mr Gladstone to remedy crying evils admitted on all sides? A great historic party has been broken up; and, as Lord Rosebery confessed at Glasgow four years ago, his friends and yours have “burnt your fingers over what is called constitution-making.” The Home Rule Constitution prepared by Mr Gladstone for Ireland, so as to satisfy the Parnellites, to whom he owed his majority, being emphatically rejected by the country in 1886, the Liberals had to retire for six years into the cold shades of opposition. During all that time I have been actively engaged, as one of the honorary officials of the Scottish Home Rule Association, in an enquiry into the circumstances under which Scotland, against the will of the great body of her people, was deprived of self-government in 1707, and into the financial, social, and political evils which resulted from its loss, and which only Home Rule can remedy. A few earnest men, without any selfish interest to serve or any political promotion to expect, have devoted themselves during the last seven years to diffusing the information thus acquired, and such has been the force of truth that, in spite of the want of personal influence on their part and of the “ridicule and contempt” which has been poured upon them alike by open enemies and professing friends in Parliament and the press, the Scottish Home Rule movement is now so completely identified with the bulk of the electorate that, on the 23rd of June last, you and other 39 Scottish M.P.'s, by a majority of 40 to 21 of Scottish votes, resolved “*That, in consequence of the pressure of public business, and the failure of the House to deal with Scottish affairs in accordance with the wishes of the Scottish*

people, it is desirable to devolve upon a Scottish Legislature all matters exclusively relating to Scotland." The speech of Sir George Trevelyan, the Scottish Secretary, in support of this resolution, did him the greatest honour, and entitled Scottish Home Rulers to believe that their cause would be adopted by the Government. But a few days afterwards, in answer to a question by Lord Camperdown—who, Liberal Unionist as he is, felt bound to say of the Scottish Home Rule Association, "that they had used arguments which it was extremely difficult for Mr Gladstone or any Government which accepted the principle of Home Rule to combat"—Scottish Home Rule was repudiated by the representatives of the Government in the House of Lords—Lord Rosebery remarking, with more levity than good taste, that any noble Lord might as well "ask Her Majesty's Government's views about the creed of St Athanasius."

We had, however, looked for better things from you. Again and again, before the last election, you had expressed opinions in favour of Home Rule all round; and you made repeated endeavours to induce Mr Gladstone to indicate the main features of the Home Rule Bill, which it was understood he had in contemplation. Having failed to do so before the General Election, it is not in the mouth of either him or his followers to complain of the House of Lords having declined to pass a Bill—the first attempt by Parliament at constitution-making for the United Kingdom—the terms of which he had studiously concealed from the electors.

It is a natural and a right feeling on the part of a constituency to rejoice in the promotion of the representative who has sought and won their suffrages, and I congratulate you respectfully on the high appointment you have received and graced. But, unfortunately, instead of the Member of Parliament so favoured continuing, as he ought, to be a man of light and leading to his constituency in all matters affecting their political interests, and making their promotion in Parliament his first object, he is expected, apparently, to subordinate such considerations to those which seem more likely to keep his Government in power. You may recollect Burns' dialogue of "The Twa Dogs," one of which, supposing "some gentle master" to be "thrang a-parliamentin',

"For Britain's guid his saul indentin,'"

is thus corrected by the other,

"For Britain's guid ! guid faith, I doubt it,
Say rather gaun as Premiers lead him,
And saying Ay or No's they bid him."

When it comes to this, and the vital interests of one's native country have to be placed in the balance against the duration of any Ministry, I for one, and also, I feel sure, all your constituents whose support is worth having, will say "Perish the Ministry that would betray Scotland!"

It is upon no less serious a charge that I venture now to arraign you before my fellow-electors of East Fife.

Adverting first to what occupies almost the whole of your Leven speech—the question of

IRELAND :

we Scottish Home Rulers are at one with you as to the great principle of Home Rule. It is applicable, in such an Empire as ours, which has outgrown the capacities of an over-centralized Government, to every loyal and law-abiding community. Every such community should be allowed to manage all affairs affecting itself, which can be done better by itself than by others. In other words, "when the accumulating wants and growing interests of a widely-expanded Empire overtax the Legislative or Administrative Organisation at the seat of Government, DECENTRALIZATION is the safest remedy for the congestion."*

But, in applying this great principle, regard must be had to the existing system of Government. It is not enough, as you and your party are never tired of saying, to maintain "the imperial unity and supremacy." Care must be taken, when establishing a subordinate Legislature, not to dislocate the existing Parliamentary system. This would naturally have suggested a general Decentralization, relieving Parliament of all local legislation, and confining its functions to matters of common interest and imperial concern. Such was clearly the view of Mr Gladstone when, at Aberdeen, on 27th September, 1871, he spoke as follows:—

"Parliament is over-tasked. It performs a great deal more work, and has probably at all times—most certainly for the last forty years—performed a great deal more work than any other legislative assembly in the world. There is no doubt that the question of improving the machinery of Parliament, with a view to the more effective despatch of public business, is becoming more and more one of the serious questions of the day. To Englishmen, Scotchmen, Irishmen, Welshmen, for us all, it is most important that we should endeavour, if we can, to devise some improved arrangements in that respect, and if it be possible for Parlia-

* "Outlines of the FEDERAL UNION LEAGUE."

ment, without breaking up its vigour and unity of action, and its paramount authority, to readjust its machinery in such a way as to give greater facility and expedition in the despatch of those large portions of its business which are either local or social and non-political, there can be no doubt that the accomplishment of that object will be a matter of the highest interest and importance to the community of the three kingdoms."

It may well be asked, in the light of such words, uttered fifteen years before, how it came about that, instead of suggestions on this subject being submitted to the deliberate consideration of Parliament and the people, there emerged suddenly in April, 1886, from the brain of Mr Gladstone,—like Minerva full armed from the head of Jove,—a thing never attempted before in British history—a full-fledged constitution for the separate national government of one only of the United Kingdoms?

This Bill was the creature of peculiar circumstances. Under the autocratic sway of Mr Parnell, 85 of the 103 Irish M.P.'s had been banded together with the avowed object of rendering the British Parliament unworkable. Mr Gladstone's Government, after trying every conceivable method of coercion both in and out of Parliament, had been itself ousted from power with the aid of what had come to be known as the Parnellite party. Just as the Clerkenwell explosion rung the knell of the English Church in Ireland, so did Mr Parnell's followers, by the accident of the general election of 1885 resulting in something like a tie between the great Liberal and Conservative parties, which gave the Parnellites the option to place either Mr Gladstone or Lord Salisbury in power, become the real genesis of Mr Gladstone's Home Rule Bill.

We know now, but you are inclined I think to forget, that it was Mr Parnell, the autocrat of his party, who was alone consulted by Mr Gladstone as to the general purport of the New Irish Constitution, and that he accepted it only *pro tanto* with a specially reserved objection to its financial arrangements.

From that day to this, the people of Ireland generally have never been consulted with reference to a change the most important to which any nation can be subjected. Such a change cannot be expected to work well unless it is the outcome of wishes formed and expressed by the general body of the people, and as to which no important minority has been excluded from discussing it in all its details. Can we wonder, then, if a national constitution, thus devised by

a single English statesman and submitted only to one Irish leader, whose aims and actings were regarded with abhorrence by probably a third of the Irish people—possessing the most of the property, trade, and intelligence of Ireland, and including the many inhabitants of Ulster, its most flourishing province, with whom we Scottish people are most closely connected in kindred as well as religious profession—is, after the lapse of seven years, still a source of bitter strife among the Irish people? It is the greatest modern instance of that exceptional treatment of Ireland as a conquered province of England which has been the source of centuries of discontent and agitation among the Irish. I do not deny, however, that Home Rule, if extended to Ireland as the equal of the sister countries and with all the consideration which England and Scotland as loyal and law-abiding nations would expect and demand for themselves, is the true remedy for such discontent and agitation. Mr Gladstone has no doubt persuaded himself that this high-handed treatment of Ireland is dictated by generosity; and I would be the last to deny that he brings to this novel experiment in British statesmanship qualities of head and heart in which he has not been surpassed by any of the British politicians who have distinguished themselves during his long Parliamentary career. But, in considering what may be the natural feelings of our Irish brethren, we must try to realize what would be our own in similar circumstances. Scotland looks back with pride on her history as a nation, and can sympathize with the patriotism which renders so many Irishmen eager to show that Ireland, notwithstanding centuries of oppression and misrule, is still capable of distinguishing herself as a self-governing nation. But the true Scotsman who claims Home Rule for his country would disdain to accept it as a mere boon from England. Whatever may have been the wrongs suffered by Scotland at the time of its union with England, we maintain our right to political equality with that great country. If, as all admit, the British Parliament is no longer able to conduct the local legislation and administration of the home countries without neglecting interests which are common to all of them as well as to our colonies and dependencies, then every self-respecting citizen of the United Kingdom—be he Englishman, Irishman, or Scotsman—will maintain his country's right to national self-government on an equal footing with the sister countries, and to an equal place with them in the Imperial Parliament.

You have laboured in your Leven speech to meet the many objections which have been stated to the last edition

of Mr Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, and I acknowledge the legal dexterity of your replies. But you have failed to remove the stigma which attaches to legislation of this kind undertaken at the dictation of a party disloyal to the highest traditions of the British Parliament and to the national instincts of every self-respecting Irishman. Were I an Irishman offered a Home Rule Bill drawn up by the most skilful British politician, but regarding which my country had not been consulted in the same way as every British colony has been when endowed with responsible government, I would despise it like a bone thrown to a dog. There are evidences of this feeling even among the Irish Nationalists. It arises naturally from the claim of the Irish people as an intelligent and law-abiding community able and entitled to manage their own affairs, and if so, best able to say how and by whom they should be managed.

It would be amusing if, in the light of such right national feeling, it were not lamentable, to follow you in the instances you give to show the wisdom of the Irish Bill even when inconsistent with your own. In the important matter of a second chamber for the Irish Legislature, you pointed out that the original proposal was to have two orders voting together, and as regards the second chamber now proposed you frankly admitted, as you had gone in for "ending" our own House of Lords, that if the matter were left to your own unaided judgment you would not be in favour of establishing a second chamber in Ireland. But don't you think this is a matter for the unaided judgment of the Irish people, whose affairs, and theirs alone, are to be dealt with by the Irish Legislature, whether in two chambers or in one? What evidence is there to show that the sense of the Irish people was taken upon this question as dealt with in either the first or the second Bill? You may reply that the sense of the Irish people can only be learned constitutionally through the votes of their Parliamentary representatives. But you know well that such representatives, especially when a small minority in a great Parliament, must deal with such questions according to the wishes of their party leader, and that neither the original proposal of a vote by orders, nor that of a second chamber now made was communicated to the Irish people before they elected the representatives who were to deal with such important matters.

The same observation applies to every provision of the Irish Bill, but the extraordinary capriciousness with which matters of the deepest importance both to Ireland and to Great Britain have been dealt with is perhaps best shown in

the history of the provisions made for the representation of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament. In his first Bill, Mr Gladstone proposed that, as Ireland was to have the exclusive management of its own affairs in its own legislature at Dublin, and as it passed the wit of man to distinguish between matters Imperial and matters British so as to admit Irish members to vote upon the former, and to exclude them when the latter were being dealt with, the proper course was to terminate the representation of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament. Ireland was, in fact, to be reduced to the position of a British colony, but subject to the all-important difference of being taxed. The ruinous consequences of attempting taxation without representation had, however, been too serious for Britain in the case of her American colonies to be forgotten, and even by many advocates of Home Rule this was regarded as a fatal blot in the Bill.

In 1886, I was a constituent of Mr Gladstone, and up till that time I had been one of his most enthusiastic supporters. Being President of the Liberal Committee at Rosslyn, where I then resided, I convened the Committee for the 17th April, 1886—nine days only after the introduction of Mr Gladstone's first Irish Home Rule Bill—and discussing it and the whole question of Home Rule under the heads indicated in my letter to the *Scotsman* four months before, I maintained that

“The dilemma which Mr Gladstone has confessed himself to be in as regards the exclusion of Irish representatives or their admission to the Imperial Parliament admits of no solution except the extension at the same time to England and Scotland, and also perhaps to Wales, of the Home Rule which he proposes to give to Ireland.”

But to the conviction which has grown so rapidly in favour of this proposal, now known as Home Rule all Round, Mr Gladstone has hitherto turned an ear so deaf that it can only be accounted for by its being supposed inconsistent with the interests of his party. His political masters were the followers of Mr Parnell, who had been to him a thorn in the flesh, and he would gladly have sent them to Ireland and kept them there. They could never be depended upon for such steady support to the Liberal party as had for nearly sixty years been given by the more obsequious members from Scotland. Many a time the scale had been turned by Scottish Liberal votes against a Conservative majority in England. Therefore, as Mr John Morley exclaimed in the Music Hall in December, 1886, “England cannot afford to dispense with the noble Liberalism of Scotland!” The

plain English of this is that Scotland was to be denied Home Rule so as to be used as a catspaw by the Liberal party in England, Home Rule being thus, by the same means, denied to England also.

If to many who were not blinded by Mr Morley's flattery and their own party feeling this was apparent seven years ago, it should be obvious enough by this time to every thinking Scotsman. For what have you now the hardihood to propose? That Scotland with its 72 members should, in all its dearest domestic interests, be placed at the mercy of 80 Irish members who, leaving all the domestic affairs of Ireland safe under the exclusive management of its own legislature at Dublin, are to be free to put their fingers at Westminster into every Scottish pie. Verily, your belief in the meekness and long suffering of your constituents must be unbounded. You tried to reconcile them to this monstrous proposal by maintaining that it would make no difference, as our present position is the same—the only alteration proposed being to reduce the Irish M.P.'s in the Imperial Parliament from 103 to 80.

"But," you added, "on the other hand, people say you will have these 80 men going about hawking their votes first to one political party and then to another, not by references to the question of English or Scottish, or even to the Empire, but in order that they may purchase for Ireland some new concession in the interest of their own citizens. Gentlemen, what an amount of cant is talked upon this subject! People hold up hands of holy horror at this prospect as though it were the picture they were drawing of a possible evil in the future. It is an exact description of the state of things which has prevailed in the past."

This, to say the least, was unkind to your revered leader. If there is cant, you should not have forgotten that Mr Gladstone began it. For what, in introducing his second Irish Home Rule Bill on 13th February last, did Mr Gladstone assign as "in his opinion the strongest argument against the universal voting of the Irish members?" The matter is so serious and important, for Scotland especially, that I must answer my question in Mr Gladstone's own words:—

"I wish," he continued, "to approach this question in a spirit of trust. I believe myself that suspicion is the besetting vice of politicians, and that trust is often the truest wisdom. But still we must not, with our eyes open, deliberately leave an easy entrance and a strong temptation to intrigue. Well I have great confidence, speaking generally, in the personal character of political men—but I cannot

deny—I will not say whether there has been or are—but I cannot deny that there may be parties that might descend to intrigue for party purposes if some very large question of controversy entirely British, but still deep and vital, were severing the two great parties in this House, and the members of these parties knew what could bring over the 80 Irish representatives or a large contingent of them to support their views and carry the day. I am afraid, sir, of opening a possible door to wholesale and dangerous political intrigue." (*After making some apologetic references to the Irish M.P.'s whom he would not blame.*) "That dread of intrigue appears to me to be a most formidable weapon. I think it is not merely an anomaly as we might view it in this House, but that it is what plain unlettered Englishmen would think who cannot understand why Irish votes on some question of education, or some other matter in which Englishmen are interested, and which is in no respect Irish, should be determined by those who had a separate Parliament to determine the same question for themselves."

Although there are probably not many "unlettered" Scotsman among your constituents, I venture to predict you will find few to believe that if, as you say, there are even now Irish M.P.'s "going about hawking their votes first to one political party and then to another, in order that they may purchase for Ireland some new concession in the interest of their own citizens," this reprehensible practice would not be encouraged if the people of Great Britain were so simple as to abandon the only protection they now have against it—namely, the reprisals to which such Irish M.P.'s are at present exposed when the interests of Ireland are dealt with in the British Parliament. By your proposal to place all such interests under the exclusive protection of the Irish Legislature, leaving ours at the mercy of 80 irresponsible Irish patriots, it will be as clear to most of your constituents as it was to Mr Gladstone himself that we would be "opening a possible door to wholesale and dangerous political intrigue."

And yet with a light heart the only protection which Mr Gladstone had been able to devise against such an obvious sacrifice of British interests, namely, what is called "the in-and-out" system of Irish representation, whereby the Irish M.P.'s were forbidden to vote upon questions dealing exclusively with British interests, was abandoned in committee by him and his small but servile majority upon 24 hours' notice. The reluctance shown by the Liberal party to appeal at once to the country upon such a Bill is quite accountable if this were the only blot upon it.

There is, however, one consolation in connection with the sudden change thus made in the arrangements for Irish representation at Westminster. Under a system of Home Rule confined to Ireland, there were only three ways in which the matter could possibly be arranged:—(1) By excluding Irish representatives altogether, as Mr Gladstone proposed in his first Bill; (2) by allowing them to vote only on Imperial questions and such as affected Ireland—"the in-and-out" system contained in the 10th clause of Mr Gladstone's second Bill; and (3) by giving the Irish the exclusive management of their own affairs in Dublin, and allowing 80 Irish M.P.'s to make ducks and drakes of ours in the Imperial Parliament.

The first two plans having been abandoned as impracticable, only the third remains, and as regards it Scotland has the deepest interest. We certainly have made many sacrifices to obtain for the Irish the desire of their hearts. But there is a limit. Even a Scotsman will turn. If you can persuade us to place the interests of our country under the control—it may be for years, it may be for ever—of 80 irresponsible Irishmen, while Scotland has only 72 representatives to protect them, we will deserve to be trampled on for submitting tamely to unworthy treatment.

Having on this vital question exhausted the resources of civilization, it must now be evident to men so able as you and Mr Gladstone that, in the words of my address* at Rosslyn on 17th April, 1886, his dilemma "admits of no solution except the extension at the same time to England and Scotland, and also perhaps to Wales, of the Home Rule which he proposes to give to Ireland."

Although it may seem possible to your constituents, if impossible apparently to you, to have too much of Ireland, I cannot leave it without referring to your observations on its financial position. It is simplicity itself as you put it, viz. :—

" The revenue raised every year by taxation in Ireland	amounts in round numbers to about	... £7,000,000
" Expenditure incurred every year to meet the	cost of Irish Local Government, ...	4,700,000
" The balance gives you the contribution which	the Irish taxpayer at the present makes for	<hr/> £2,300,000
	the expenditure of the Empire, ...	<hr/>

* This address, of which a few copies were printed in 1886 by desire of the Rosslyn Liberal Committee, will be found in *The Scots Magazine and British Federalist* for December, 1893.

"It follows that if you want to preserve the existing state of things, if you want Ireland, that is to say, to go on contributing to the Imperial expenditure the same, or practically the same sum as she does at present, the simplest and the easiest and the most intelligible way of doing it is to take one-third of the Irish revenue—the revenue raised by taxation—and to appropriate that to the Imperial Exchequer, and leave the other two-thirds to the Irish Legislature and Exchequer for executive and legislative purposes, and this is exactly what we propose to do."

But simple, easy, and intelligible as your way is, you know it was not the way proposed in either the first or the second Home Rule Bill as introduced by Mr Gladstone. In 1886 he proposed what he now calls "the method of the lump sum, which was called by those not very friendly to it the method of tribute." Ireland's contribution for the expenditure of the Empire was then proposed to be £4,242,000

By the second Bill it was originally proposed

to keep the Irish customs as Ireland's contribution, but the amount being much the same as that now contributed by Ireland, "the good old rule, the simple plan" was finally resorted to, Ireland's contribution being 2,300,000

Here is a gain to Ireland and a loss to Great Britain of no less than £1,942,000

Nearly two millions a year. "Good Heavens!" one can fancy John Bull exclaiming, "I wish I had allowed the first Bill to pass. The last seven years would have put nearly fourteen millions into my pocket, and taking the difference of nearly two millions a year at thirty years' purchase, I would have been sixty millions more to the good." I doubt if he will feel much consoled for his loss by Mr Gladstone's reason for it. "The method of the lump sum," (£4,242,000), "we have thought, naturally disappeared together with the adoption of the new plan for the retention of the Irish members." So said Mr Gladstone on 13th February last. The exquisite irony of the remark seemed to escape John Bull at the time. "You *would* have your Irish members, and now you must pay for them," Mr Gladstone virtually said, and had John Bull been on the alert he would, no doubt, have growled "Dear at the money!"

But really, sir, this sort of thing is beyond a joke. It is not business.

Let us see how your simple plan would work out if applied to Scotland. The only attention bestowed upon our poor country in the financial part of your Leven speech was to try to persuade us that, by joining England in allowing Ireland half a million a year for the next six years, we are "getting off very cheap." Well, apologising for introducing a subject apparently so unpopular as

SCOTLAND,

here is how we would stand if Scotland were dealt with according to your simple plan. I take my figures from the very careful and accurate statement given by Dr Hunter, M.P., in his late valuable pamphlet on "The Financial Relations between England and Scotland."

The revenue raised every year by taxation in Scotland	amounts to	... ... ... ... ... ... ...	£8,144,740
Allowing us the same proportion as Ireland to	meet the cost of Scottish Local Govern-		
ment, two-thirds, 	5,429,827		

The balance should be the contribution which the Scottish taxpayer would make for the expenditure of the Empire, one-third, ... £2,714,913

Now what are the actual melancholy facts of our case which you are so careful to conceal from your constituents?

Revenue raised by taxation in Scotland, as above,	£8,144,740
Actual cost of Scottish Local Government,	... 2,140,228
Balance, being actual contribution by Scottish	taxpayer to the expenditure of the Empire,

£6,004,512

Contrasting, therefore, the present position of Ireland and Scotland, the following is the result:—

	Population Last Census.	M.P.'s Taxation.	Contribution for Imperial Expenditure.	Spent at Home.
Ireland,	4,704,750	103	£7,000,000	£2,300,000
Scotland,	4,025,647	72	8,144,740	6,004,512
Difference,	<u>679,103</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>£1,144,740</u>	<u>£2,559,772</u>

And this is the simple plan which you wish to be perpetuated as regards Ireland! Although a Scottish M.P., you ignore Scotland altogether. You leave it out in the cold as much as if it did not exist. For what sins of ours or our fathers are we condemned—and, for aught you appear to care, to be condemned for ever—although the population of Scotland is 679,103 less than that of Ireland,

to be taxed annually £1,144,740 more, and to contribute to the expenditure of the Empire more by £3,704,512, while we get back for all local purposes in Scotland £2,559,772 less than Ireland?

But whatever happens to Scotland, you are quite clear that no loss is to fall upon Ireland. Without letting your constituents know that our unfortunate country gets from the Imperial Exchequer considerably less than one-half of what Ireland receives, while Scotland is forced to pay to that Exchequer nearly three times as much as Ireland, here is your defence of the system of Irish extravagance which you expect us to perpetuate by giving you our votes:—

“It is perfectly true, and I admit to the full, that if you look at the £4,700,000 which is expended at present on Irish Local Government, that is an excessive sum. What is the reason? Are the Irish to blame for it? No; you and I are to blame, for it is because we have set up in Ireland a grossly and extravagantly expensive system—a system under which, to take only two items, the administration of justice costs per head of the population three times as much as it does here in Great Britain; under which the police costs more than twice as much per head of the population as it does here in Great Britain; under which, if you were to pursue the matter through all the stages of the administrative structure, you find similar instances of extravagance and costly and excessive expenditure.”

But while you blame your constituents for this gross extravagance in Ireland, you never ask who is to blame for the meanness and parsimony with which Scotland is treated. Samuel Johnson, English Philistine and Tory as he was, is reported to have said to an Irish gentleman in the end of last century:—

“Do not make an union with us, sir. We should unite with you only to rob you; we should have robbed the Scotch if they had had anything of which we could have robbed them.”

My Irish correspondents, such as the able and venerable Mr O’Neil Daunt, have satisfied me that Lord Castlereagh connived with the English statesmen of the time in jockeying Ireland after the Union, so as to subject her as soon as possible to an equality of taxation with England, but, in these latter days, Ireland seems to have turned the tables on the English. How has she done it? By sending Irishmen to represent her in Parliament,—men who had the courage and ability each to stand up and to stand together for their own country. Possessing 103 votes to Scotland’s

72, in itself an unfair advantage, Ireland had greater influence with the Government of the day, and her votes were always cast for what the Irish members considered the benefit of their own country. Scotland, unfortunately, has been much more simple. When, by attending to their own business with their clear heads and strong and steady hands, the Scottish people became comparatively wealthy, they forgot Dr Johnson's warning. Trusting the interests of their country in Parliament to self-seeking politicians, many of them Londoners who had their own axes to grind, Scottish votes have for the last half-century been given chiefly to the Liberal party. Truly liberal has been our reward! English and Irish alike have robbed the Scottish people, and now you tell us that if, in addition to the extravagant sums which are admittedly wasted in Ireland, we join England in giving to Ireland half-a-million a year more, we "are getting off very cheap!"

Far be it from me to say that Ireland's contribution towards Imperial expenditure is too small, or to suggest anything ungenerous towards the Irishman. There is no native of the British Isles whom personally I like better. But it is no kindness to any man to encourage him in idleness and extravagance. What we have to do under a proper system of Home Rule is to see that all the three kingdoms are taxed for Imperial purposes upon an equal footing—that is, according to the numbers and wealth of the population—and to leave each of them to regulate its own domestic taxation and expenditure. If it is extravagant, its own people will have to pay for it; if it is economical, its own people will get the benefit. Nothing will do more to steady Ireland than to let her pay her own way. When she does that, she will not require to come to us to help to pay her police. Much fewer will serve her.

You may say, however, that to complain of the financial treatment of Scotland as compared with a country supposed to be so poor as Ireland, is unfair and misleading. Well, let us take England also into account.

Under the late Government some progress was made in an enquiry (which Mr Gladstone has not thought it expedient to continue) into the financial relations of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Dr Hunter, in the pamphlet already referred to, has given the results of an authoritative statement from the Government departments. The document, he explains, was not prepared with a view to determine the proportions in which the three kingdoms should contribute to Imperial expenditure; but it contains material that enables

us to arrive at a tolerably clear conclusion on the point. The return is only for the years 1889-90 and 1890-91, and it will be enough here to give the results arrived at by Dr Hunter with reference to the latter year.

Dividing the nett Imperial expenditure for the latter year (£57,801,821) between England, Scotland, and Ireland in the ratio of their comparative wealth, the proportion falling on Scotland is shown by Dr Hunter to be £5,212,458. The total Imperial revenue derived from Scotland, as compared with the contributions she received and her fair share of Imperial taxation, is thus brought out:—

REVENUE PAID, AND DUE, AND CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED,
BY SCOTLAND.

Property, customs, and excise, ...	...	...	£8,144,740
Local taxation account, ...	...	...	761,881
Miscellaneous, ...	...	...	135,393

Total revenue from Scotland, £9,042,014

Deduct—

Proportion of Imperial expenditure

 fairly due, £5,212,458
Contributions to Scotland, ... 2,140,228

—————
7,352,686

The over taxation of Scotland was thus £1,689,328

In other words, under a proper system of Home Rule, Scotland would be a gainer by £1,689,328 a year. Assuming population to be the criterion and not wealth, Scotland's over taxation is stated by Dr Hunter at £1,235,663. As, however, Dr Hunter gives reasons why the former figure rather than the latter may be taken to represent correctly the annual loss to Scotland through the present distribution of Imperial taxes, let us adhere to it, and see what he suggests might be done with the money if we had it.

The balance due to Scotland being, as before, £1,689,328 would permit the abolition of the following taxes, which took from Scottish consumers in the year 1890-91 the following sums:—

Tobacco, ...	...	...	...	£1,067,795
Tea, ...	...	...	...	337,814
Dried fruits, coffee, chicory, and cocoa, ...	...	...	...	62,457
				————— £1,468,066

And there would remain available for other purposes, £221,262

The taxes on the above articles consumed in Scotland chiefly by the wage earning classes would, if thus abolished, be *a clear gain to every working man in Scotland of about THIRTY-FIVE SHILLINGS A YEAR.*

With the remaining £200,000 a year we might have the satisfaction of putting our ancient royal palaces, castles, and other buildings—endeared to all true Scotsmen by the romantic traditions of Scottish history—into such order as they are capable of after so many years of Government neglect, and of visiting them free of the paltry impositions now exacted. This once done, it would cost little afterwards to keep them in order, and the rest of our recovered money would go a long way to provide secondary and technical schools wherever they are required, or harbours of refuge, the want of which consigns so many Scottish fishermen every winter to a watery grave.

Dr Hunter concludes his able paper by explaining that it is no part of it to examine all the financial benefits that Home Rule would bring to Scotland. But I feel bound here to remind you of the information given by “a well-known financier” in his article “*The Union of 1707 viewed financially,*” which you will find in the *Scottish Review* of October, 1887.

Taking population, according to the census of 1881, as the basis of his calculations, the author of this paper estimates:—

(1) The over taxation of Scotland (now shown to amount to £1,689,328) at	£900,000
And the sums she is entitled to but is defrauded of in the expenditure of the Imperial revenue as follows:—	
(2) Proportion due but not paid to Scotland on account of the civil list for annuities and pensions, salaries and allowances, courts of justice and miscellaneous, over	50,000
(3) Army and Navy expenditure, if Scotland had her fair share of these forces, probably £500,000, but say only	300,000
(4) Expenditure on dockyards, naval and victualling yards, and <i>materiel</i> and armament of the fleet if Scotland had her share,	200,000
(5) Expenditure on public works and buildings, public departments, law and justice, education, science and art, &c., due but not paid to Scotland, fully	500,000
Carry over	£1,950,000

	Brought over	£1,950,000
(6) Expenditure on customs and inland revenue, deficiency,	90,000	
(7) Scotland's share of post, telegraph, and packet services not received, upwards of ...	200,000	
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The total annual loss thus inflicted on Scotland being over	£2,240,000	
(8) Private bills and appeals from supreme court of Scotland having to go to London is estimated to cost us annually	150,000	
(9) The loss which Scotland suffers through the withdrawal and diversion to England of so much of the expenditure of the wealthiest classes, especially the landed aristocracy—the consequence of the transfer of the legislature from Edinburgh to London—is estimated by this financier at	2,000,000	
<hr/>		
		£4,390,000

" Making a yearly Total of upwards of FOUR MILLIONS STERLING, or about a pound per head *per annum* for the whole population of Scotland."

The Marquis of Bute, in the paper which he contributed to the *Scottish Review* for October, 1889, on "Parliament in Scotland," refers to the above figures as "unanswered and unanswerable;" but points out that the financier had greatly under-estimated the amount carried out of Scotland by its wealthier inhabitants, who spend so much of their time and money in London.

You mentioned, as one reason for our agreeing to your financial proposals in regard to Ireland, that during the last forty years Great Britain has had to write off loans to Ireland, as bad and irrecoverable, to the amount of no less than £10,000,000.

Would you kindly observe that, taking the very moderate estimate by the financier referred to of over-taxation and under-payments, being £2,240,000 a year, the total loss thereby inflicted on Scotland during the last forty years amounts to no less than £89,600,000.

It may give you and your constituents something serious to reflect upon if, in concluding these remarks upon your financial views with reference to Ireland, I ask you to note that, on the same moderate calculation, Scotland has lost during the seven years for which you have represented us in Parliament no less than £15,680,000. It would have been

better for us and for Scotland if, instead of engaging in a seven years' wild-goose chase after an impossible measure of Home Rule for Ireland, you and your colleagues had made some slight effort to obtain redress for the much more long-suffering and defrauded country which you represent. If you had gone in for Home Rule all Round, it might by this time have been accomplished, and all grievances throughout the United Kingdom might to a great extent have been redressed.

And now, in order that you may have no ground to accuse me of omitting any direct reference to Scotland or Scottish affairs contained in either of your speeches, I will quote all you are reported to have said upon a subject which naturally is, or ought to be, nearest the hearts of the Scottish people you were addressing :—

“ He did not regard the maintenance of the Irish representatives at Westminster, with power to vote upon English and Scotch affairs, as a final solution to the problem of Home Rule. We do not, he said, in Scotland regard with satisfaction a state of things under which Scotch business is transacted not in accordance with the wishes or the opinions of the Scottish representatives and, therefore, of the Scotch electorate. These wishes and these opinions are being perpetually over-ridden by the votes of English and of Irish members. We believe that sooner or later the thing must come, gradually and in its due time—it will be a very great mistake to precipitate it before it is ripe—we believe that sooner or later the process of devolution, which begins with the granting of Home Rule for Ireland, will find further application in other parts of the United Kingdom ; and that the Imperial Parliament, step by step, will be relieved of a great mass of the purely local affairs which it at present transacts, and at every disadvantage of limited time and of imperfect knowledge, and those matters will be relegated to be dealt with on the spot by and for the persons whom they directly and immediately concern.”

In this passage there is some indication of your being aware both of the wrong done to us by the neglect and mismanagement of Scottish business in Parliament and of the true remedy, namely, a general devolution by Parliament of all local business to representative bodies for each of the historic and geographical divisions of the United Kingdom. You do not, it is true, express yourself so forcibly regarding Scotland's Parliamentary grievance as your friend, the member for West Fife. In fact, you stated “ that the Government and the Liberal party were set free during the

remaining months of the year for the prosecution of some of those legislative enterprises connected with England *and with Scotland*, to the rapid and thorough execution of which, as much as the granting of Home Rule to Ireland, we were called by the voice of the country at the General Election of last year."

If you had to address your constituents now, you might say, as Mr Birrell wrote in *The Scottish Liberal* of 7th March, 1890:—"Home Rule or no Home Rule, one thing is perfectly certain, that Scotland will never get Scotch business done as things are at present. Her members might as well be sent to Pekin as to Westminster. *This session nothing whatever will be done for Scotland.*"

But while you are conscious to some extent of Scottish grievances, I regret to say that your treatment of them gives me no confidence that your party has any serious intention, as yet, of redressing them by giving to Scotland and the sister countries the Home Rule you have promised to Ireland.

The appearance of Sir John Leng on your platform at Ladybank reminds me of the expression "step by step," first used I think by him, and repeated by you at Leven the evening before. Unless you desire to become known as "THE GOOSE-STEP PARTY," would it not be well to abandon the policy of Home Rule "step by step"? You have been at it for Ireland during the last seven years, and I really believe you are further from it than ever. "Tak' a thocht and mend," as we say in Fife; "*Reculez pour mieux sauter*," as they say in France. Instead of delaying Home Rule for another year and then re-introducing your discredited Home Rule Bill for Ireland, bury it out of sight—it has served its purpose, and was understood to be dead long ago—and content yourselves with indicating by a resolution of the House of Commons the legislative and administrative powers to be delegated to the several divisions of the United Kingdom. Having done this, there would be no immediate occasion to go again to the House of Lords, or to dissolve Parliament. All you would have to do is to arrange for the members for each division meeting in its own capital a representative body of its inhabitants, to discuss the question how and by whom such powers can best be exercised. Such a—Convention let us call it—it is a historical word in Scotland, and is identified in America with the preparation and amendment of both its Federal and its State Constitutions—would no doubt appoint a Committee of experts (as was suggested long ago by Lord Rosebery) to

prepare a scheme or draft Constitution. The Committees so appointed being simultaneously engaged in each of the four countries, their labours are not likely to extend beyond a few months, and when their reports were presented to Parliament, it would be in a position to revise the several schemes, and then to give them legislative effect by such a Bill as would undoubtedly embody the sense of the people concerned, and need not therefore be rejected by the House of Lords.

Meantime, you can be attending to your ordinary legislation. It will occupy all your time and energies, and you need not burn your fingers again with Constitution-making.

By some such course as this, Home Rule could be brought into harmonious operation throughout the United Kingdom within three years, and its "Ten years' Conflict" would be over.

If, however—learning nothing and forgetting nothing—you and your party shall cleave to your idol—this unhappy Irish Bill—you may expect some of your present supporters to follow at next election the scriptural injunction, in that case made and provided, "Let him alone."

For myself—being like you, but in a humbler sphere, "a limb of the law"—I know that if, as in the present case, the terms of a copartnery were being re-considered, and one of the partners desired some privileges which another thought himself as much entitled to—the latter being my client—my advice to him would be not to rely on any vague promises of something being done hereafter, but to decline to sanction the remodelled contract until it made due provision for his interests. From the account I have now given you of the advantage which has been taken of the Scottish people in the past, you may not unnaturally regard them as a feeble folk easily led by a popular leader. Permit me to cite two certificates of the character of Scotsmen recorded by Sir Walter Scott, who knew them well, in his journal of February, 1826, just when, by the letters of Malachi Malagrowther, he was rousing them to resist successfully the threatened abolition of our one pound notes:—

"I do believe Scotsmen will show themselves unanimous at least where their cash is concerned."

"If I can but get the sulky Scottish spirit set up, the devil won't turn them."

For myself, my mind is made up. I am a Scotsman first—a Liberal afterwards. I would prefer the *status quo* to the Irish Home Rule Bill. In case of the latter being again forced upon our acceptance by the Liberal party, I

feel I shall not be far wrong if I act on the hint given at your Ladybank meeting by my worthy cousin, Mr Landale of Woodmill, when "he asked if Mr Asquith was prepared to do something for the county he represented, and whether he did not think the county would be better served by a more local member."

Knowing that our Parliamentary representatives are moved too often more by the fear of losing votes than by more lofty considerations, I take leave to remind you and my brother electors that if the Liberal party lose even 17 seats at the next election, the majority of 34, by which the Irish Bill was carried in the House of Commons, will be extinguished. This result—possibly this alone—will enable you to realize the magnitude of the issues involved in the Home Rule question. For the British Empire the issue is nothing less than FEDERATION or SEPARATION.

As for Scotland, it is perhaps difficult for any Englishman to realize the patriotic feeling which lies in the hearts of the Scottish people—in none more deeply than in those of your constituents, whose chief inheritance is the noble traditions of their native land. The time has come for the people of Scotland to recover the management of their own affairs—the national birthright of which we were basely deprived nearly two hundred years ago.

My last words, therefore, are those which I used at Rosslyn more than seven years since. They are as appropriate now as they were then.

"In these circumstances, it is the duty, in my opinion, of every Liberal, and especially of every Scottish Liberal, to insist that the present opportunity be taken for granting to each of the three kingdoms the legislative powers which are essential to its proper government, and I hope that sufficient public spirit may be found among the Scottish members to induce them to make a stand on this historic occasion worthy of the ancient and independent kingdom which they represent."

I remain, with respect,

Your faithful Servant,

W. MITCHELL.